

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in this application.

It is proposed to amend the claims as shown below.

**Listing of Claims:**

1-14. Cancelled

15. (Currently Amended) A method of identifying an object, comprising ~~the steps of:~~  
encoding an object by utilizing discernable physical attributes for ~~encoding~~ representing  
information regarding said object; and  
utilizing said ~~encoded~~ information as a key to ~~retrieve~~ decode data encoded in a digital  
watermark associated with said object.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15, further comprising ~~the step of~~  
authenticating said object by utilizing said data encoded in said digital watermark.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15, wherein said physical attributes further  
comprise a set of taggants in association with said object, wherein said set of taggants is  
comprised of members having discernable physical attributes predetermined ~~for~~representing  
the encoding information regarding said object.

18-30. Cancelled

31. (New) A method to associate a marking with an object, comprising:  
representing authentication-related information with at least one discernable physical  
attribute of the object; and  
inputting the authentication-related information as one of a plurality of inputs to a process  
that creates an image having encoded, machine-readable information, the image being used  
as the marking that is associated with the object.

32. (New) The method of claim 31, where the at least one discernable physical attribute  
comprises a set of taggants that are associated with the object, where the set of taggants is

comprised of at least one member having the at least one discernable physical attribute.

33. (New) The method of claim 32, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant size and shape.

34. (New) The method of claim 32, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant color and emission wavelength.

35. (New) The method of claim 32, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises taggant loading factor.

36. (New) The method of claim 32, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant radio frequency emission and a response to a radio frequency.

37. (New) The method of claim 32, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant magnetic field and a response to a magnetic field.

38. (New) The method of claim 31, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one dimension of the object.

39. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:  
decoding the encoded, machine-readable information in the image to obtain decoded authentication-related information; and  
comparing the decoded authentication-related information with the at least one discernable physical attribute of the object.

40. (New) The method of claim 31, further comprising:  
decoding the encoded, machine-readable information in the image using the authentication-related information.

41. (New) the method of claim 31, where the image comprises a barcode.

42. (New) The method of claim 31, where another input to the process that creates the image comprises information expressive of a date of manufacture.

43. (New) The method of claim 31, where another input to the process that creates the image comprises information expressive of a country of origin.

44. (New) The method of claim 31, where another input to the process that creates the image comprises information expressive of an authorized distribution channel.

45. (New) The method of claim 31, where the image is disposed on the object as the marking.

46. (New) The method of claim 31, where the image is disposed on another object as the marking.

47. (New) An apparatus, comprising:  
a detector for detecting a marking associated with an object, the marking comprising encoded information; and  
a decoder for decoding the encoded information using a key that comprises information obtained from at least one discernable physical attribute of the object.

48. (New) The apparatus of claim 47, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises a set of taggants, where the set of taggants is comprised of at least one member having the at least one discernable physical attribute..

49. (New) The apparatus of claim 48, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant size and shape.

50. (New) The apparatus of claim 48, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant color and emission wavelength.

51. (New) The apparatus of claim 48, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises taggant loading factor.

52. (New) The apparatus of claim 48, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant radio frequency emission and a response to a radio frequency.

53. (New) The apparatus of claim 48, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one of taggant magnetic field and a response to a magnetic field.

54. (New) The apparatus of claim 47, where the at least one discernable physical attribute comprises at least one dimension of the object.